

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

FILED

MAR 20 2020

CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
NORFOLK, VA

In re:

COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE EXIGENT  
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY THE OUTBREAK  
OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19):  
POSTPONEMENT OF OUTSIDE EVENTS AND  
TEMPORARY POSTPONEMENT OF NATURALIZATION  
PROCEEDINGS

Case No. 2:20mc7

General Order No. 2020-04

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia has been closely monitoring the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), as well as the developing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC").<sup>1</sup> The CDC has recommended that events of any size be conducted only if it is possible to proceed in a manner that protects vulnerable populations, further recommending that all Americans avoid close contact with other people (i.e., being within six feet) "if COVID-19 is spreading in your community."<sup>2</sup> The President of the United States likewise issued written guidance in response to COVID-19, with the President recommending: (1) that all Americans avoid gathering in groups of more than ten people; and (2) that older

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fprevention.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fprevention.html).

people and people with serious underlying health conditions stay home when possible.<sup>3</sup>

Consistent with the evolving CDC advisories, guidance from the President, and guidance from the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, this Court has implemented a staged response to the ongoing public health emergency, and has done so with the input from multiple stakeholders and in conformity with this Court's Continuity of Operations Plan. The first stage of the Court's response involved suspending non-case related outside events, tours, and other gatherings in our Courthouses, as well as postponing naturalization ceremonies for the remainder of March 2020.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, the Court issued multiple General Orders postponing the misdemeanor dockets, postponing and continuing to a future date all upcoming civil and criminal jury matters, and later postponing all in-court civil and criminal proceedings for two weeks, with the exception of critical and emergency matters. The Court also temporarily restricted certain visitors to our Courthouses, to include those who have recently traveled to certain places with a high number of COVID-19 cases, and those who have

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<sup>3</sup> See [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20\\_coronavirus-guidance\\_8.5x11\\_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Such initial response was made internally without a formal order, and public notification of such decision was posted on the Court's website. All subsequent stages of response were set forth in a "General Order," similar to the instant General Order, and were both posted on the Court's website and filed in miscellaneous case number 2:20mc7.

been instructed to self-quarantine by a physician or local health official.

Given the rapidly evolving community, state, and federal response to the spread of COVID-19, the growing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases within this District, and the rising number of U.S. fatalities, additional preventive measures are appropriate at this time. It is therefore **ORDERED** that:

- (1) all non-case related outside events, tours, and other gatherings in our Courthouses are postponed until further notice;
- (2) all naturalization ceremonies scheduled to occur in our Courthouses **through May 1, 2020**, are postponed and will need to be rescheduled, as such proceedings generally involve far more than fifty attendees. As circumstances dictate, the Court will determine at a later date whether to temporarily suspend exclusive jurisdiction over naturalization proceedings (in those Divisions of this Court that retain exclusive jurisdiction), in order to allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement the ability to conduct small-group administrative naturalization ceremonies.

**It is so ORDERED.**

  
/s/ *MSD*

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Mark S. Davis  
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Norfolk, Virginia  
March 20, 2020